

True. As Second Woman, Pan-at-lee was always in demand. It had made her sleek and heavy, and so strong she dropped her babies with no more than an effortful grunt. Om-at gave Ta-den a shadowy smile and moved one hand in a duck-bill movement. Quack. Quack. Quack. Ta-den. Always talking, one word after another, barking like a male, yes, but in sequences like a female. Ta-den grinned and nudged him again.

Commotion in the distance. From beyond the hill, Ko-tan and his two friends came into the clearing, young males getting out of their way, Low Women peering at them, looking to see what they had in the way of guest-gifts. Nothing. Empty hands. Some of the females began to titter and nudge each other, and it was just then In-sad hooted, signalling he was done. More tittering. Ko-tan was getting old now, weakening, though still strong enough, and had been first among males since before O-lo-a had become First Woman. Thinking back, Om-at realized he couldn't remember a time when Ko-tan hadn't lorded it over the males. Still, it was the females who tittered at him now; that was all that mattered.

Ko-tan stood and stared for a while, at grinning In-sad, at Pan-at-lee, who yawned, sitting up, beginning to work on her little antelope. Ko-tan suddenly turned on one of his followers, rugged, round-faced Mu-lot, raising a fist, barking quick angry words. Mu-lot cowered and tried to hide behind tall pudgy Dak-at, who was known to eat guest-gifts himself rather than hand them over for sex.

Ta-den snickered, then gestured with his thumb at Ko-tan, made the duck-bill movement with his other hand. "Quack," he said dryly. "Quack." It made Om-at laugh. Ta-den, for all his unnecessary volubility, could be a very amusing male.

By late afternoon of the following day, Om-at and Ta-den had been out in the bush, stalking fruitlessly, for many hours. They'd eaten their fair share of the females' forage stock in the morning, of course, but hunger was gnawing at them, a constant distraction. Pretty soon, it would be time to go home and meekly eat the evening meal, sitting by themselves, outside the ring of females and children, Low Women chattering merrily, young ones giggling among themselves. And, from not so far away, they'd hear the happy noises of males who'd been luckier on the hunt.

There wouldn't be many of those. It really was time to move the camp.

Ta-den tapped him on the shoulder and whispered, "Drink."

Om-at nodded. Cold water from the stream would quiet his belly's sharp complaint for another little while. After that it would be time to go back, apparently empty-handed. Om-at felt the fist of desire clutch again in his abdomen, bringing forth dark anger, a particle of resentment. It had gone on too long and tonight, no doubt, he would slink off in the darkness to do it by himself. When they watched him go, the Low Women would snicker and point and nudge each other.

Ta-den, a little bit ahead, about to walk out on the bank of the stream, stopped suddenly, one hand reaching back, touching Om-at on the chest. He twisted, looking back over his shoulder, eyes wide

with excitement, and, in a voice quiet as a breeze, said, "Tor-o-don."

Om-at stiffened. Tor-o-don. That could be bad news or good. There had been a large band of tor-o-don moving up the valley since before the last Full Moon, wandering clumsily about, fighting with the little baboon clans over hard, gritty forage the waz-ho-don wouldn't eat.

He crept forward, peering over Ta-den's shoulder. There was a little splashing from the stream, drawing his eyes. There. A tall muscular waz-ho-don-shaped animal, pale-skinned, covered all over with long black hair, crouched by the stream, drinking from its cupped hands. As it bent over, Om-at could see its bare, pink genital area. A female. Good. Tor-o-don males were extremely dangerous, a full head taller than a man, powerfully muscled, apparently almost as strong as the knuckle-walkers rumoured to exist somewhere over in the sunset lands. Fortunately, they were also very slow. But if they got their hands on you, you were finished.

Females, by contrast, were smaller than waz-ho-don, generally no heavier than fully grown antelopes. Unfortunately, they were quite fast, impossible to catch under most circumstances. Ko-tan, supposedly, had once brought back an adult tor-o-don female and made a guest-gift for every male in the tribe. It was a night the older males relished remembering.

This one was too far away. By the time they reached that spot she'd be running down the river bank, nothing more than an odd smell left behind.

Another splash. Om-at clutched Ta-den's shoulder. There, up river from the female, was a tor-o-don cub, no more than a summer or so old, a hairy little thing, sitting on its backside, dabbling its feet in the water, cooing softly to itself.

Om-at pulled his friend, turning him around, tapped himself on the chest, flexed his biceps and pointed at the female. Tapped Ta-den, made a running motion with his fingers, pointed at the infant. Ta-den nodded. Muscular Om-at would distract the female while quick Ta-den would run out and grab the baby. He knocked a fist on his forehead. OK.

Om-at got into position, slinking through the underbrush to a point closest to the female and waiting. When Ta-den barked, he launched himself out into the open, running at the female, barking his magic word, *Bite!* over and over. The female spun, milk-filled breasts bouncing, mouth open with astonishment, eyes full of fear.

What an odd face! Om-at could never look at a tor-o-don without a strange thrill going down his spine. All animals had faces, of course, even fish had faces. All you needed was eyes, nose and mouth. If you peered close, even the little black ants had faces. This face was very waz-ho-don-like. Brown waz-ho-don eyes, nose, even mouth, though the yellow teeth were so big and flat. But the brows, heavy with bone, the flat head under short, coarse hair...and, of course, hair everywhere, covering up that weird pale skin.

Looking at Om-at, the female lifted her fists, glanced up river, recoiled, screamed with despair...despite himself, Om-at looked. There. Ta-den had the infant, holding it by shoulder and head. The baby squalled, then Ta-den twisted hard. You could hear the little neck crackle and break. Another scream from the female.

potential buyer resemble those of someone buying a novel or a textbook less than those of someone replacing a consumer durable. He doesn't want a review so much as a *Which?* report. On the basis of admittedly patchy reading, mine goes like this:

**The Matter Myth.** A cheap and cheerful item of limited life-expectancy, but with a good range of basic features. It contains little unfamiliar material, though the passages on the fundamental nature of quantum wormholes and the quantum argument in favour of the Big Crunch against the Open Universe were new to me. In Davies's exposition the "inflationary" phase of Big Bang theory looks less ad hoc than usual, and "renormalization" of quantum equations less disreputable. Perhaps the troubled ghost of Paul Dirac can now rest easier. If you have *The Arrow of Time* (Peter Coveney and Roger Highfield) or *Unravelling the Mind of God* (Robert Matthews) it's probably not worth trading in yet. If you have *A Brief History of Time*, you may well find it a useful accessory. If you have nothing later than *Coming of Age in the Milky Way* (Tim Ferris) it may be worth getting as a stop-gap before your next big buy. If your principal interest is in chaos theory, you would do better to buy James Gleick's *Chaos* and/or Davies's own *The Cosmic Blueprint*; if it in quantum theory, *The Cosmic Code* (Heinz Pagels) will serve you better, as will Davies's own *The Mind of God* if you are more inclined towards cosmology. And if you've read nothing later than George Gamow's *Mr Tompkins* books, it's just what you need to find your bearings.

(Chris Gilmore)

## UK Books Received January 1993

*The following is a list of all sf, fantasy and horror titles, and books of related interest, received by Interzone during the month specified above. Official publication dates, where known, are given in italics at the end of each entry. Descriptive phrases in quotes following titles are taken from book covers rather than title pages. A listing here does not preclude a separate review in this issue (or in a future issue) of the magazine.*

Anthony, Piers. **Mercycle.** Grafton, ISBN 0-586-21451-8, 343pp, paperback, £4.99. (Sf novel, first published in the USA, 1991.) 25th January 1993.

Asimov, Isaac. **The Complete Stories, Volume 1.** HarperCollins, ISBN 0-00-224139-0, 614pp, hardcover, £15.99. (Sf collection, first published in the USA, 1990; it contains the entire contents of the slimmer volumes *Earth is Room Enough* [1957], *Nine Tomorrows* [1959] and *Nightfall and Other Stories* [1969]; there's a good deal of prime Asimov here.) 1st March 1993.

Asimov, Isaac. **Forward the Foundation.** Doubleday, ISBN 0385-269420, 417pp, hardcover, £14.99. (Sf novel, first published in the USA, 1993; proof copy received; the final title in the "Foundation" series and, presumably, Asimov's last novel.) 22nd April 1993.

Auchincloss, Louis. **False Gods.** Constable, ISBN 0-09-471980-2, 214pp, hardcover, £14.99. (Short-story collection, first published in the USA [?], 1993; described as an "elegant sequence of fables," this book employs Greek myth in contemporary settings; it's probably not fantasy in the proper sense, but may be of interest to some of our readers; Auchincloss is a distinguished American lawyer and novelist who seems to have been around the New York literary scene for as long as anyone can remember.) 22nd February 1993.

Bear, Greg. **Anvil of Stars.** Arrow/Legend, ISBN 0-09-978040-2, 499pp, paperback, £4.99. (Sf novel, first published in the USA, 1992; sequel to *The Forge of God*; reviewed by Mary Gentle in *Interzone* 60.) 18th February 1993.

Bemman, Hans. **The Broken Goddess.** Translated by Anthea Bell. Penguin, ISBN 0-14-016585-1, 234pp, paperback, £5.99. (Fantasy novel, first published in Germany, 1990; by the author [born 1922] of the fantasy blockbuster *The Stone and the Flute* [1983; trans. 1987].) January 1993.

Card, Orson Scott. **The Call of Earth.** "Homecoming: Volume Two." Legend, ISBN 0-09-926011-5, 304pp, trade paperback, £8.99. (Sf novel, first published in the USA, 1993; there is a simultaneous hardcover edition [not seen].) 18th February 1993.

Card, Orson Scott. **The Memory of Earth.** "Volume One of Homecoming." Arrow/Legend, ISBN 0-09-919961-0, 294pp, paperback, £4.99. (Sf novel, first published in the USA, 1992; reviewed by Paul McAuley in *Interzone* 59.) 18th February 1993.

Chadbourne, Mark. **Underground.** Piatkus, ISBN 0-7499-0164-0, 247pp, hardcover, £13.99. (Horror novel, first edition; proof copy received; a debut book by a new British writer, the accompanying publicity letter describes it as "the first socialist horror novel" [tell that to Ian Watson].) 11th February 1993.

Collins, Warwick. **Death of an Angel.** Pan, ISBN 0-330-32135-8, 418pp, paperback, £4.99. (Near-future political-cum-yachting thriller, first published in 1992; third in the trilogy which began with *Challenge* and *New World*.) 12th February 1993.

Constantine, Storm. **Sign for the Sacred.** Headline, ISBN 0-7472-7908-X, 373pp, trade paperback, £8.99. (Fantasy novel, first edition; this is possibly a sequel to her last novel, *Burying the Shadow*, but, if so, the publishers have done their best to conceal the fact.) 11th February 1993.

Disch, Thomas M. **The M.D.: A Horror Story.** Grafton, ISBN 0-586-07284-5, 541pp, paperback, £5.99. (Horror novel, first published in the USA, 1991; justly praised by Dean Koontz, Stephen King, Professor Tom Shippey and all, it's one of the masterpieces of recent years; reviewed by Mary Gentle in *Interzone* 60.) 8th February 1993.

Donnelly, Joe. **Bane.** Arrow, ISBN 0-09-910300-9, 461pp, paperback, £4.99. (Horror novel, first published in 1989.) 7th January 1993.

Donnelly, Joe. **The Shee.** Arrow, ISBN 0-09-910471-7, 520pp, paperback, £4.99. (Horror novel, first published in 1992.) 7th January 1993.

Eca De Queiroz, [Jose Maria]. **The Mandarin (and Other Stories).** Translated by Margaret Jull Costa. Afterword by Robert Webb. Dedalus, ISBN 0-946626-98-7, 125pp, paperback, £6.99. (Fantasy collection, first edition; originally published in Portuguese, 1880-1897; it contains a short novel and two other tales by an author [1845-1900] who is "considered to be Portugal's greatest nineteenth century novelist.") 17th February 1993.

Eddings, David. **Domes of Fire: The Tamuli, Book One.** Grafton, ISBN 0-586-21858-0, 470pp, trade paperback, £8.99. (Fantasy novel, first published in the USA, 1992; the beginning of a new trilogy which follows on from the events of "The Elenium.") 8th February 1993.

Gallagher, J.V. **Gameworld.** Headline, ISBN 0-7472-3978-9, 374pp, paperback, £4.99. (Humorous fantasy novel, first edition; this is a first fantasy work by a writer who "has written several novels under a variety of pseudonyms"; the name given on the copyright statement is Simon Fowler.) 18th February 1993.

Gallagher, Stephen. **Followers.** Hodder/NEL, ISBN 0-450-54062-6, 325pp, paperback, £4.99. (Horror novel, first published in 1984.) 28th January 1993.

Gibbons, Dave, Steve Rude, Karl Kesel and Steve Oliff. **World's Finest.** "Superman/Batman." Titan, ISBN 1-85286-438-9, pages unnumbered [circa 160pp], trade paperback, £8.99. (Sf/fantasy graphic novel; first edition; originally published in parts in the USA by DC Comics, 1990.) 28th January 1993.

Hamilton, Peter F. **Mindstar Rising.** Pan, ISBN 0-330-32376-8, 438pp, paperback, £4.99. (Sf novel, first edition; a debut book by a new British writer.) 12th March 1993.

Hubbard, L. Ron. **Disaster: Mission Earth, Volume Eight.** New Era, ISBN 1-870451-14-7, 363pp, paperback, £4.99. (Sf novel, first published in the USA, 1987; this is the American [Bridge Publications] softcover edition with a British price sticker; New Era have been very hit-and-miss about sending us their paperback releases of the novels in this ten-volume series, but we can't honestly say we're sorry.) 21st January 1993.

Irwin, Robert. **The Limits of Vision.** Dedalus, ISBN 1-873982-10-0, 120pp, paperback, £5.99. (Fantasy novel, first published in 1986; this was Irwin's second book, after the highly praised *The Arabian Nightmare*; reviewed by John Clute in *Interzone* 16.) 11th February 1993.

James, William. **The Earth is the Lord's: The Sunfall Trilogy, Book One.** Orbit, ISBN 1-85723-084-1, 535pp, paperback, £5.99. (Sf novel, first edition; this is a pseudonymous debut book by a Scottish novelist in his early 40s, a former "soldier, business executive and academic.") 25th February 1993.

Jones, Jenny. **Lies and Flames: Volume Three of Flight Over Fire.** Headline, ISBN 0-7472-3876-6, 560pp, paperback, £5.99. (Fantasy novel, first published in 1992; reviewed by Mary Gentle in *Interzone* 67.) 21st January 1993.

Jones, Liane. **The Dreamstone.** Mandarin, ISBN 0-7493-1206-8, 488pp, paperback, £4.99. (Timeslip fantasy novel, first published in 1992; this is one of those points at which mutually uncomprehending genre-spheres meet: of course, the title has been used before, by C.J. Cherryh in 1983 [sigh], but this debut book by a Welsh author won the £10,000 Betty Trask Prize for best romantic novel of 1992; Celia Brayfield describes it as "one of the most enthralling books of its kind I have ever read" and *Today* thinks it is "little short of